

A Story of Love and "Professional" Rivalry

The Cake Walk

Copyright, 1903, by Zoe Anderson Norris

By ZOE ANDERSON NORRIS



HE programme at an end, the manager, advancing to the footlights, announced the cake walk. There was a hushed moment; then those who had stood tirelessly throughout on chairs made a mad rush for the seats giving upon the aisles down which the participants were to pass.

On the platform the judges had ranged themselves in a formidable row, importantly solemn. The cake stood before them, a square of flaky pink upon which rose a giant pyramid, prismatic in the snowy brilliancy of its icing.

The music commencing, the great curtain at the left swung aside, and the drum major appeared. Dancing daintily forth, he flung his baton to the roof—or nearly—caught it again and received the attendant burst of applause after the fashion of one to the manner born and accustomed.

Close on his heels followed the first couple.

Jasper Jefferson Jones occupied a seat above the row of boxes at the extreme right, where an excellent view was to be had of the walkers as they rounded the curve and pranced down the broad aisle facing the entrance, but from which, because of the dense crowd intervening, only a parol or two could be seen as they passed from beneath the curtain to this aisle. In order to see, therefore, he rose, the whites of his eyes gleaming in the excited dusk of his countenance.

The effort proving fruitless, he forced himself to sit again with the rest, occupying himself with consulting his programme, running a dark and trembling forefinger restlessly down throughout the list of names and finally stopping at "Maggie Malone, Frog Eyed Pete accompanying."

He raised his head in time to see the first couple come mincing around the curve, the girl looking seriously into the face of the man as she bowed, pirouetted once or twice and passed serenely on.

Other couples, trusting to the splendor of their attire and appearance rather than to their nimbleness of toe,

walked sedately by. The dignity of their walk verged upon stateliness, but they failed to interest him.

Again he looked across toward the curtain through which others thronged. He caught sight of a bobbing white parasol. His heart bobbed with it. It approached the bend of the aisle, and

partner, Frog Eyed Pete, whose costume, containing her colors, matched hers in a way very pleasing to behold.

In like manner the wonderful variety of his gyrations coincided with the grace of her pirouettes.

Fortunately for the average mortal, scowls do not kill, or Frog Eyed Pete, who through the witcheries of the dance had won away the ladylove of Jasper Jefferson Jones, would then and there at the zenith of his cake walking career have fallen dead.

Maggie had paused effectively in the center of the aisle. With a whirl, she stood apparently upon ether, though as a matter of fact she rested on the tip of a small pointed toe.

Jasper gave a shout of delight. "The toe turn!" cried he.

At the burst of applause brought about by this maneuver he once more stood, panting with pride, following the dip of her slight figure until it disappeared and the wave of her white parasol above the heads of the crowd as she gyrated before the ravished eyes of the row of judges alone presented itself.

He was brought back to earth by a second burst of applause which echoed from box to gallery. A dazzling couple held the floor before him. Frowningly he recognized them—Pickaninny Simpson and her dapper partner, Light Foot Sam.

Involuntarily he shaded his eyes from the blaze of their coloring. Gorgeous in pink skirts profusely bespangled, Pickaninny flourished a pink parasol above a splendid hat of the same rich color as she twirled half way round, then twirled back again, persistently repeating this performance until the wonder of it was that her body did not rebel at the tremendous nature of the exertion and separate at the hinge of the waist line where it was joined.

If Maggie had been greeted with approbation, the applause ensuing upon the accomplishment of this feat was stupendous. The rafters rang.

The couple sailed triumphantly on, and the music stopped.

Then the manager, again advancing, announced in stentorian tones that out of the fifty or more couples on the floor ten of the best would be selected for the final competition for the prize.

This was done. Those who had de-

ended upon their appearance rather than on their nimbleness of toe were promptly dropped out of the running, together with others whose walking had been of a nature to command neither admiration nor applause.

Then commenced the chasing of the ten. Jasper's pride threatened to escape the confines of his high white collar and burst the button thereof when among these favored ones he discerned the rapturous parol of Maggie Malone. Again she came tiptoeing slowly around the curve, this time very elegant in a movement somewhat resembling that of the minut. Bowing low in the elaborate courtesy of dames of long ago, she challenged the gallery.

It shouted itself hoarse.

Encouraged, stretching her lithe body backward, her head dangling flowerlike, her deep gaze fastened upon the fantastic figure of her partner, she sent herself along the walk by a series of kicks of such exceeding swiftness as to give her something the aspect of flying.

Shrieks of applause ascended roofward, whereupon, not to be outdone, Frog Eyed Pete turned himself wrong

side out and all but stood on his head with his feet in the atmosphere.

Gazing gloomily upon this excess of effort, Jasper Jefferson Jones' black lips compressed themselves into a grim line of disapproval, which, happily for Frog Eyed Pete, was all lost on him.

His glance left the offender and rested on Maggie Malone, who just then skirted the curve nearest him, her cream colored countenance turned gravely upward. He leaned breathlessly forward, hoping for a look of recognition; but none came. Accompanied by a ringing echo of cheers, she danced on and on, willowlike and supple as a nymph, and disappeared.

Her disappearance made room for Pickaninny, who, spinning blithely into the arena, went into contortions of cake walking bordering upon extravagance.

It would be easier to describe what Pickaninny didn't do than what she did.

The crowd went mad. It shrieked. It stamped. It yelled. Calls of "No. 5!" her number, reverberated, split the air, broke upon the din like hailstones on a roof, and Pickaninny passed.

Though the evolutions of the eight other couples were well worth watching, Jasper failed to watch them. Except for the alert policemen, formidable in brass buttoned uniforms, stationed here, there and everywhere he would have left his place in the gallery and lagged hungrily along in the shining wake of Maggie Malone.

As it was his eyes embraced her until she was no longer visible.

The music halting for the third time, the manager stood before the footlights, facing the cake and the audience.

"No. 5!" was hurled at him from all points of the compass, mingled with some cries of "No. 4!" but not many.

Jasper came nearer than he had ever done before to turning white. "No. 5!" Pickaninny's number. And the crowd, dazzled by the glitter of her spangles, apparently determined to set aside whatever decision the judges might attempt to make and decide for itself.

A lump rising in his throat at the thought of Pickaninny's triumph and his Maggie's defeat threatened to choke him.

The clarion voice of the manager broke in on his distress.

"The judges so far have been unable to arrive at any decision," it said. "Now, five will be picked from the ten, and these will walk directly in front of them upon the stage."

The judges employed ten minutes or so in moving back to make room for those who were to walk, and Jasper contrived somehow or other to live through this interval and on into that of the appearance of the first three couples who came forward from the wings, bowed first to the judges and then to the audience and stood patiently but radiantly by.

The fourth arrived—Pickaninny, the blaze of her spangles further augmented by the flare of the footlights!

The welkin rang. Hats were hurled ceilingward.

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FACTS AND FUN FOR THE LITTLE MEN AND WOMEN

Noble Emperor William Junior

By ELIZA ARCHARD CONNER

IT was awfully cold. The thermometer had been at zero every morning for two weeks and hardly climbed above it in the middle of the day. Snow lay deep upon the ground. The sleighing was the best known in years, and all the people who could raise so much as a dry goods box pulled upon bent sapling runners turned out to enjoy it.

The Yale family made an evening sleigh ride call on relatives six miles away. Father, mother and the grown son, Albert, drove off in the sleigh. A mile away they stopped at Posttown to pick up young Mr. Yale's sweetheart. Then they went on again.

Their relatives lived at the top of a long hill. At the bottom of the hill a gate opened from the public highway into the private hill road. At the top of this was a second gate opening into the farmyard. Here Albert jumped out almost before the sleigh stopped and opened the gate. The sleigh passed in, and the young man walked behind it up the yard. All at once he made an exclamation of surprise.

What was that dark object moving along behind the sleigh? It looked like a big dog, except that it was flat upon



"OH, OH, OH!"

the ground and seemed to slide upon runners like the sleigh.

"Oh, oh, oh!" exclaimed all the people in the sleigh when they, too, saw the object.

Albert picked it up and carried it into the light in the warm farmhouse. What was it? You could not guess.

It was a strong, sturdy little boy only four years old. He was not over-warmly dressed, and he had not even mittens on his fat hands, which were purple with the cold. Mrs. Farmer, the



relative, rubbed them and felt the boy's body and patted him to see if he was frozen. He was not, neither anywhere near it, although he was very cold.

"What's your name?" asked Mrs. Farmer.

"Noble Emperor William Junior," answered the boy loud and proud.

"What's your father's name?" But Noble Emperor William Junior could not tell that or where he lived. They found a child's sled fast to the big sleigh, but that was all. They could not tell where on the road he had caught on to the sleigh. For all they knew he might have dropped out of the full moon. They concluded finally, though, that he must belong in Posttown, nearly half a dozen miles away. But where? And how could he have possibly clung to the sleigh all that distance with his bare hands clutching to the rope of his little sled without freezing or getting his fingers so benumbed that they would have had to lose their grip? One thing is sure—if he had lost his grip, he would have slipped into the dark, lonely country road and frozen to death. It does look as if there is a good angel to take care of little children, doesn't it?

The kind people warmed Noble Emperor William Junior and fed him.

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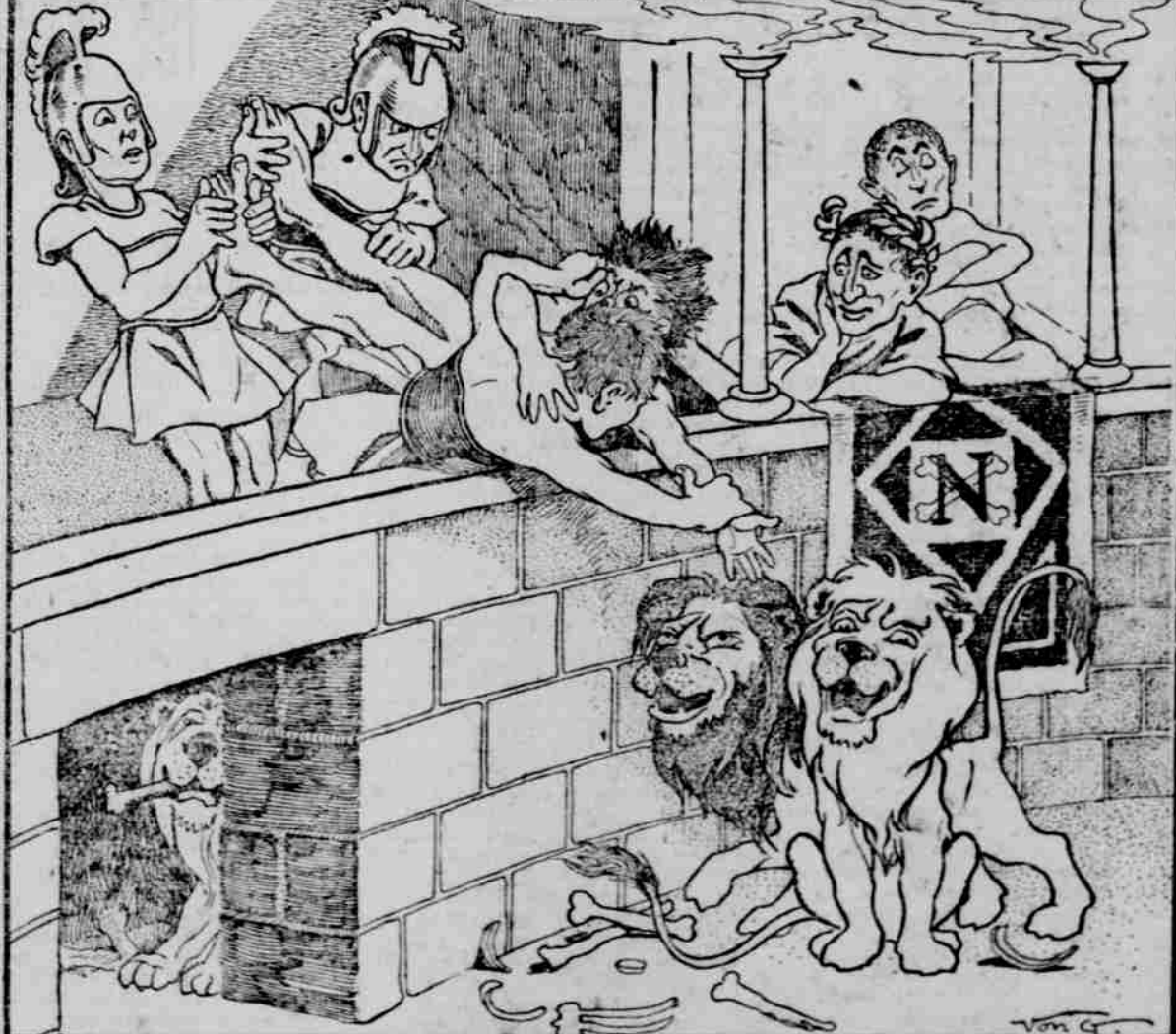
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HISTORIC SENSE AND NONSENSE

BY O. H. VON GOTTSCHALCK

AUTHOR OF "YANKEE DOODLE GANDER" ARTIST "LIVES OF THE HAUNTED" ETC

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BORN A.D. 37 NERO DIED A.D. 68

Bad Nero burnt up half of Rome, and thus committed arson; He helped himself to what he saw, and this